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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 006540

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SUBJECT: CONSULATE ADANA TRAVELS TO TUNCELI AND ELAZIG

11. Classified by AmCon Adana Principal Officer Walter S. Reid, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

12. This message is from AmConsulate Adana.

13. (C) Summary: Officers from Consulate Adana traveled to Tunceli and Elazig provinces October 25 and 26 to discuss PKK movements and human rights issues with local officials and human rights groups. The Tunceli governor told us that PKK activity in the province had increased but that anti-PKK measures had not increased, but were &non-stop,8 and would likely continue throughout the winter. Tunceli,s DEHAP mayor was upbeat on women,s issues, but she often feels under pressure from local military and state authorities. The former president of the Tunceli Bar Association believed that the operational tempo of local military operations had picked up over the past few months. He also related stories of seeing mutilated bodies of militants killed in clashes with state security forces; Elazig Human Rights Association (HRA) representatives related similar stories, though reported no evidence that local police or prosecutors were involved in torture. HRA claimed that security officials are complicit in provocations and attacks on &those who champion peace and human rights.8 End Summary.

Tunceli Governor Gives Party Line

14. (C) During an October 25 visit to Tunceli, Provincial Governor Mustafa Erkal told us that the number of PKK militants in the province had &obviously8 increased, but he refrained from confirming that 350 militants had entered the province, as was recently reported in the press. Erkal said that PKK logistics in the province were not tied to Iraq, though some explosives have entered Tunceli from there. Erkal emphasized that PKK cadres live off the land and often depend on local farmers for subsistence. Erkal denied that military operations against the PKK had increased in recent weeks. He claimed that anti-PKK measures were &non-stop,8 and would continue as much as possible, even through the winter months. He told us that most of the PKK-related incidents in the province this year have involved harassment of local security forces and roadside explosions. Erkal recalled one night attack on a military unit.

Tunceli Mayor Offers Contrasting Views

¶5. (SBU) Also on October 25, Tunceli,s DEHAP Mayor Songul Abdi Erol told us that her 2003 win was the first time that DEHAP had won a mayoral election in the province, a traditional CHP stronghold. She attributed her electoral victory to the fact that she was a female candidate. Erol said that her municipality was 9 trillion lira in debt (approximately 6.9 million USD) when the city was handed over to her by the previous CHP administration. Many municipal workers, salaries had not been paid for a long time, she said. Since she took office, her administration had managed to pay all the back salaries, as well as start new infrastructure projects, such as building new &green areas8 in the city and pursuing a variety of cultural activities. Erol claimed her DEHAP-run Tunceli city budget received scant central funding, while AK Party-run smaller Tunceli provincial municipalities were awarded greater funding.

¶6. (SBU) Erol was hopeful about the soon-to-be-formed pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Movement (DTH) party,s stance on women,s issues. She said that the party,s draft charter called for 40 percent female membership. Erol believed that women will become more active in the party, and that the party will establish counseling centers on such issues as female health and honor killings . She reported that Tunceli municipality has already established such women,s counseling centers. Erol believes that sensitivity to women,s issues among Kurds was increasing. She also noted that up to 9 of approximately fifty DEHAP mayors were women, even though she was the only female mayor of a large town or city in southeast Turkey. (Note: Erol and most of the predominately Kurdish population of Tunceli province are Alevis, whose religious traditions are more open and progressive,

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especially on women,s issues, than the more traditional, conservative Sunni Muslim Kurds, among whom a large proportion of Turkey,s honor killings and other practices of oppression against women occur. Alevi women do not cover themselves in public and they are generally treated as equals with men in society. End Note.)

¶7. (C) Erol reported that she often felt under pressure from local military and state authorities. The local military regiment commander often publicly criticized her; whenever she released a press statement, the commander openly questioned her decisions, she said. When the central government staged a flag-waving march last spring in response to a Mersin flag burning by Kurdish youth during the Kurdish Nevruz holiday, all employees of all government agencies in the province were required to attend, she said. (Note: An Embassy contact at the European Commission office in Ankara also reported that civil servants were given time off and instructed to attend the march. End Note). Erol told us that because she did not attend the march, the local military regimental commander criticized her in public as well as in private conversations with her, calling into question her patriotism and devotion to the state as an elected official.

Former Bar Contact Under Apparent State Pressure

¶8. (C) The former president of the Tunceli Bar Association, Huseyin Aygun, told us in an October 25 conversation that the military had been carrying out intensive operations in the province over the past seven or eight months. The military portrayed these operations as a continuation of ongoing operations, but Aygun believed the operational tempo had increased in recent months over the previous period.

¶9. (C) Tunceli Governor Erkal warned us in an earlier October 25 conversation that Aygun was under investigation on charges of fraudulently filing a case, that he was trying to get rich by suing the Turkish state and appealing , case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and that he was not

to be trusted. Aygun told us these charges are false. He explained that an elderly client who was living in Thrace had sent Aygun a power of attorney document allowing him to pursue the client,s Tunceli-based case regarding forced removal from his village in the 1980,s or 1990,s. The client died before Aygun opened the case in the ECHR, but the surviving family members neglected to tell Aygun that his client had passed away. The government claimed that Aygun had submitted fraudulent documents to the court. Aygun then obtained power of attorney from the client,s heirs to continue to pursue the case, which he successfully completed.

Aygun added that public prosecutors and other state authorities believe that no case should be brought before the ECHR; they believe doing so shows disloyalty to Turkey.

¶10. (C) In a case publicized in the press last year, Aygun had received pressure from the same local Jandarma colonel about whom Mayor Erol also spoke for taking cases involving the Jandarma,s 1994 burning of local villages to the ECHR. Aygun believed the colonel felt threatened because Aygun had opened a channel to the ECHR to bring cases of alleged Jandarma human rights violations to court. In reprisal, Aygun said, the Jandarma colonel had Aygun,s sister transferred from her job in the Tunceli branch of the Oyak Bank (an arm of the Turkish Army Pension Fund) to the bank,s branch in Cankiri, the colonel,s hometown. Aygun told us that instead of making the transfer, his sister quit her job.

¶11. (C) Aygun related allegations of mutilations of bodies of local PKK terrorists killed by security forces in Tunceli. He told us of an incident in June or July in the Mercan valley near Ovacik where 17 people were killed. Family members of the victims reported mutilations of some of the bodies, including clipped ears and carved-out eyes. Those who saw the bodies reported that most of the mutilations took place on the bodies of female militants. Aygun mentioned that photographs of the bodies had been posted on the internet and the incident had been aired on Radio Zaza in Germany. Post has not confirmed this.

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Elazig NGO Sees Security Force Crack-downs

¶12. (C) In an October 26 conversation, Elazig Human Rights Association (HRA) President Nafiz Koc told us that he had personally seen some mutilated male bodies, including the body of a male Iranian national, which had since been retrieved by his parents who came from Iran for the body. Koc believed that some of the bodies he had seen showed indications of torture before being shot at close range or otherwise killed. Indicating that mutilation took place after death, some of the bodies had their eyes gouged out and some had parts of their skulls removed then re-attached. Koc mentioned that he had also seen the body of a female Syrian national whose face had been burned. Another member of the Elazig HRA told us he had seen three bodies that appeared to have been dragged behind a vehicle

¶13. (C) Koc said that he knew of no current court cases charging the police or prosecutors with torture. Though he had never seen evidence of torture on captured PKK members, he had heard from defendants captured in the field during clashes with security forces that they had been tortured, then not taken to a doctor or given access to legal representation in a timely fashion, as required by law for all suspects taken into custody. Koc speculated this was likely because the militants were captured far from a city that might provide access to such services.

¶14. (SBU) Koc complained that during a June 20 nationwide peace campaign march, a group of human rights activists in Elazig were confronted by a group connected to the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) who

accused the marchers of collaborating with terrorists. When the MHP group began to throw stones at the marchers, the police stood between the two groups, but made no arrests or detentions of those throwing the stones. Eventually, Koc said, the police put the marchers on buses and took them to the offices of the Security Directorate &for their protection.⁸ The police did not interrogate the marchers.

¶15. (SBU) Koc believes that some security officials are complicit in such provocations and attacks against &those who champion peace and free expression.⁸ Koc listed a number of incidents to illustrate his point: During recent clashes in Mazgirt in Tunceli province, the Jandarma colonel in charge refused to conduct investigations into alleged Jandarma violations, Koc said. Indeed, he said that the Jandarma leadership actually encouraged such violations. Koc also mentioned that there has been no government action on citizens, complaints about forest fires started by security forces. In one instance, a village house was destroyed by rockets fired by security forces. When the house owner filed a complaint the government merely claimed that a terrorist lived in the house, but conducted no investigation. The government then brought countercharges against the house owner for slandering the state. A man and his three sons were arrested in the case, but are currently released while the case continues. In another case, about 20 days ago, after a cab driver was killed in Tunceli, a group that marched during the funeral was photographed by the police. Some group members became angry with the police and were arrested for resisting state forces and for assisting terrorists. In yet another case in September in Tunceli, Koc said that security forces broke into and searched the homes of the DEHAP chairman and the former DEHAP chairman while the homeowners were not at home. Security forces justified their illegal entries by stating that the two were harboring terrorists.

¶16. (SBU) Finally, Koc added that during funeral ceremonies for three security officers killed in Bingol in June, the office of the Bingol branch of the HRA was broken into. When the HRA filed a complaint with the government, the prosecutor threw the case out stating that the HRA collaborated with the PKK. Koc noted that the Elazig governor, in contrast, had met with his HRA branch after the Bingol HRA incident to hear its concerns and that Turkish police had protected the building housing the Elazig HRA during a subsequent occasion

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of comparable local tension.

¶17. (C) Comment: Post continues to follow ongoing PKK activities and state security forces violations of human rights within the southeast region. While we cannot vouch 100 percent for Aygun,s version of his conduct versus the Tunceli governor,s, it is likely a smear campaign is under way against Aygun for pursuing cases at the ECHR contrary to state security interests. Additionally, Tunceli has long seen some of the most vicious and entrenched fighting in the southeast, and while it is not as intense as in the days of martial law, the situation has significantly deteriorated on a continuing basis since the PKK in June 2004 declared the end of its unilateral ceasefire. End Comment.
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